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Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Oct., 1976, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1976), pp. 415-430

Published by: American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3485748>

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Louis F. Post and the Single Tax Movement, 1872–98

By DOMINIC CANDELORO

ABSTRACT. The career of *Louis F. Post* (1849–1928), upon his return to New York following a stint as a *Carpetbagger* in South Carolina, became, for a time, that of publicist. Post first attempted to break into regular *Republican politics*, then turned to journalism on the staff of the *New York Truth*, and finally was converted to the *Single Tax* philosophy of *Henry George* in the early 1880s. Thereafter, Post became George's closest confidante and labored hard as a writer, lecturer, and political organizer to elect George and others to make the Single Tax a reality (1). The author's sources include Post's unpublished autobiography, the files of *The Public*, *The Standard* and the *Cleveland Recorder*, as well as material from the Henry George Collection in the New York Public Library.

LOUIS F. POST was born in New Jersey in 1849. Too young to serve in the Union army, he came of age during the Civil War. Embued with the ideals of the Abolitionists, he served as a carpetbag stenographer in South Carolina between 1870 and 1872. In later life Post was to become Henry George's closest friend, an important leader of the single tax movement, the editor of *The Public*, and Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Wilson Administration. What follows is a description of Post's conversion to the single tax ideas of Henry George and the story of the role he played in the single tax movement prior to George's death.

I

THE POSTS DECIDED to leave the South after the Ku Klux Klan trials ended in the summer of 1872. The high hopes that Post and many other well-intentioned carpetbaggers had held for Reconstruction in South Carolina had been dashed by the corruption of their colleagues and the recalcitrance of white Southerners. The struggle no longer seemed worth it. Their decision to move proved to be of utmost importance for it was in New York that Post came into contact with Henry George's single tax philosophy which was to have an overwhelming impact on his life.

In the fall of 1872 Post became associated with the local Republican party as a delegate to the 15th Assembly District convention. One year later he was rewarded for his precinct work with an appointment as Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. In 1874 Post was named chairman of the 15th Assembly District Republican

convention. This role took on importance when he learned of the key part he was to play in the plan to unseat the Democratic Congressman, Fernando Wood. This required that the Republicans cooperate with one wing of the Democrats who planned to run an independent candidate against Wood. The Democrats hoped to induce the comparatively weak Republican organization not to slate a candidate for Congress in return for Democratic support for the Republican candidate for state representative. The prospect of defeating Wood, a notorious Tammany Copperhead, greatly appealed to Post and he readily agreed to adjourn the slate-making convention without nominating a Republican opponent for Wood.

When the word came down from Chester Arthur, then tsar of Republican patronage in New York, that Post must now reconvene the delegates and nominate a candidate for Congress, Post at first stalled, then buckled under the pressure. Consequently, a sure loser was named, making Fernando Wood's 1874 victory a foregone conclusion. Heeding the "crack of the boss's whip" in order to save his patronage job in the U.S. Attorney's office was a demoralizing experience for Post. He soon decided that the New York Republican organization had sunk to the level of Tammany Hall and in a typical mugwump reaction against bossism and corruption, Post quit his job in April 1875, ruining his chances for an orthodox political career (2). After Post's departure from the Republican Party he voted most often for Democratic candidates, but refused to become a formal member of the party he had grown up to detest and from which he was estranged until 1896 (3). All this while he continued to long for the return of the Republican party to the principles of Lincoln.

The next few years found Post drifting from one law partnership to another, now defending a petty thief and now suing a tenant for back rent. One of Post's sometime partners was Charles Frederick Adams, who later became an important single taxer and anti-imperialist ally of Post. Somehow Post built up an expertise in cases involving infringements of theatrical copyrights. His most important client in this connection was the Broadway playwright and impresario Joseph Hart. This connection with Hart was responsible for Post's first big break in journalism. When Hart and his associates decided in late 1879 to publish a penny daily, they engaged Post to manage the legal details. Post reacted with so much enthusiasm that the publishers asked him to serve temporarily on the editorial staff.

II

THE NEW YORK *Truth* was a brash and sensational daily which sought to build a vast circulation by crusading for the cause of organized labor. A precursor of muckraker journals, it featured daily exposés of corruption on all levels of government. The *Truth* claimed to have been the first to promote the observance of Labor Day in 1882 when Post stood among those who reviewed the first Labor Day Parade in New York's Union Square (4). Charles A. Byrne served as editor-in-chief, but by late 1880 Post was practically in control of *Truth's* editorial columns. It was in his period with *Truth* that Post expanded his interest in reform beyond the confines of free trade and honest government to include organized labor. He also came to know the leaders in the labor party-greenback movement in the city through his work on the newspaper and through the occasional writing he did for *John Swinton's Paper*, a radical labor sheet.

In November, 1882, Post was nominated as a candidate in New York's 8th District on the Central Labor Union ticket and in the next year waged an unsuccessful campaign for the office of Attorney of New York County on a combined CLU-Greenback slate. Post was only mildly in favor of expansion of the money supply but he was attracted by the Greenbackers' promise to take control of monetary policy out of the hands of private bankers and place it under the regulation of the federal government. As for the rest of Post's platform, he advocated the eight-hour day, the prohibition of child labor, equal pay for equal work for both sexes, the abolition of contract prison labor, and the establishment of a bureau of labor statistics. Post supported the Greenback candidacy of Ben Butler in the 1884 presidential race (5). When Henry George entered New York politics a few years later, it was this element which supported him so strongly.

Undoubtedly the most important result of Post's connection with the *Truth* was his introduction to Henry George and his ideas. He took up with skepticism a copy of George's *The Irish Land Question*. Post later wrote: "That appeal stirred me deeply. Reviving within me my anti-slavery spirit of Civil War times, then less than 20 years behind us, it made me realize that the struggle for relative human rights had not triumphed at Appomattox, as enthusiastic patriots like myself had confidently believed" (6). Post's complete conversion, however, was a gradual one, for as sympathetic as he was with George's attack on the land-holding system, he could not agree with George's contention that a tax on land values would offer a viable solution to Irish poverty.

In an editorial comment on *The Irish Labor Question* Post contended that this sort of tax would merely be transferred to the tenant and that it would tend to raise the price of land and rents. George replied by sending a copy of *Progress and Poverty* with an admonition that Post read it thoroughly. Soon afterward Post was confessing his error: a tax on land values would tend to make it unprofitable to hold land idle and would therefore force great amounts of unused land onto the market, causing the selling price and rental rates to fall (7). He later wrote:

From that day I was a convert to the Henry George contention that in moral principle the earth is common property, and that the best way to make it so in fact is to take over its annual values annually for public use by means of taxation . . . measured by the market value of their landholdings respectively (8).

Acting quickly, the new convert persuaded Hart to seek rights to serialize *Progress and Poverty* in the *Truth* each Sunday. Thus, the best seller was made available to perhaps 40,000 *Truth* readers (9). Post's first personal meeting with the Prophet came in early 1881 when George agreed to the serialization proposal. The ties between George and *Truth* became even stronger when George accepted a proposal that he serve as a *Truth* correspondent during his upcoming trip to Europe. From that point on, Post enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Henry George more intimately than any other man (10).

The philosophy of Henry George was really rather simple. In his California environment George noticed that there had been no poverty in the state until the building of the railroads had brought progress and selective prosperity. The reason for the appearance of poverty was that the railroads and other business interests now held most of the land and refused to sell at fair prices because they could see that the economic development of California would soon double or triple the value of their landholdings. This robbed the landless individual of access to the one commodity which is absolutely necessary in the production of goods and services—land. A perennial historical process was telescoped by California conditions.

George declared that the land and natural resources of the nation belong to the people. If this wealth could be distributed to the people as a whole and not monopolized by the privileged few, poverty could be wiped out. Government should be supported by renting out land and resources to individuals and corporations who could, by the application of their intelligence and labor, create goods and services to be exchanged. But instead of confiscating all the land and renting it back, the George plan

called for the retention of traditional modes of landholding and the imposition of a rather stiff tax—almost up to the total economic rent—on the value of the land. The person who was simply holding land in hope that economic development would make his property more valuable would be assessed the same absolute amount as would his neighbor who held an equal quantity of land but who was actually using the land for productive ends. This system would discourage land speculation and it would also encourage the most efficient use of land sites since the tax is on the land and not on the improvements. In effect, one could reduce the rate at which he was being taxed by improving his property. In addition, the system would eliminate unemployment by making marginal land available at a relatively low price to anyone who could use it productively.

Henry George and his followers did not view the single tax as a socialist scheme. Rather they saw the tax on land values and the abolition of the tariff and all the other forms of taxation which tended to discourage production as the vital steps in the restoration of competition in a system of "unperverted capitalism." Neither did they think of single taxism as merely a fiscal device. Both George and Post saw it as an ethical derivative of natural law and believed that its establishment would help eliminate most social problems.

In an important way, the George philosophy anticipated Frederick Jackson Turner's concern with the closing of the frontier and the consequent restriction of opportunity on the American scene. George's assumption that the problem of unemployment could be solved if somehow unemployed people could have access to cheap land bears a striking similarity to the Turner safety valve thesis.

Henry George and his followers were definitely not socialists, for while socialists preached government ownership of the principal means of production, George advocated government control over only the most important and non-reproducible factor in production—land, including in it—as economists do—all natural resources. By temperament a Jeffersonian, the single tax Prophet was repulsed by a penchant of socialists for regimentation. Single taxers were consistently careful to make a distinction between themselves and the socialists. While they often cooperated on individual issues such as municipal ownership of utilities as "natural" monopolies, both movements spent a good deal of their time in debate trying to prove each other wrong.

The most striking difference aside from the single taxers' emphasis upon land, lay in their approach to reform. American socialists have preached *revolution*, usually non-violent but always decisive. They have

often maintained formal party organizations and have nominated candidates, rarely with any success. By contrast, especially in the period after 1890, the single taxers have been content with a more educational approach. George believed that the capitalist system, with its ingenious counterbalancing of selfish interests against each other, was basically good but that it was being poisoned by the privilege which had grown out of land monopolization. Attacking the system at its weak points, the single taxers engaged in campaigns for free trade, direct democracy, and railroad regulation to the point where they often became indistinguishable from other middle-class reformers. Post was later to become one of the chief expositors of this social philosophy.

But despite his initiation into journalism, he still thought of himself as a lawyer. On leaving the *Truth* in 1882, Post occupied himself with his law practice, serving for several years as counsel to the Central Labor Union (11). In June 1883 he joined with a small number of other reform-minded people to form America's first organized Henry George group. Ever conscious of its link with earlier reformers, the group called itself the American Free Soil Society and adopted the motto: "Men cannot be free where land is not free" (12). Further evidence of their attempt to see themselves in the tradition of the abolitionists is their contention that the single tax movement was a struggle against land slavery just as the abolitionist movement was a struggle against chattel slavery. Actually, the Free Soil Society was little more than a formalization of a small number of George-enthusiasts who had become regular customers of a Duane Street Italian Restaurant they called "Dirty Dick's." Nevertheless, this group did experience enough growth to be able to hold a convention in New York in May 1884 that attracted delegates from several eastern states (13). In addition, the organization managed to publish *The Free Soiler*, a monthly in whose preparation Post played a minor role.

III

AFTER STRUGGLING with the Free Soil Society for a year and a half, Post and the others became discouraged and sought to broaden the appeal of Henry George's philosophy. Their new organization, the American Tax Reform League, put greater emphasis on the fiscal advantages of the single tax. In 1886 Post served as chairman of the group and membership had grown to include such prominent New York reformers as Daniel DeLeon (later a socialist leader and founder of the Socialist Labor party), Father Edward McGlynn (a New York priest devoted to the

eradication of urban poverty), Tom L. Johnson (later the great reform mayor of Cleveland), and Lawson Purdy (a long-struggling tax reformer in New York).

George's personal popularity began to skyrocket on his return from a triumphal British tour in 1884. The glow of publicity still surrounded George in the summer of 1886 when the Central Labor Union was seeking a candidate for mayor with whom they could revenge themselves on the major party candidates by spoiling the prospects of victory for one of them. Post was at first skeptical of George's chances in the New York mayoral election because a poor showing might ruin the movement. Finally, however, George agreed to accept the nomination of the Central Labor Union on the condition that the union get 30,000 names on a petition in support of his candidacy. This task quickly accomplished, George, Post, and their friends plunged into the fight.

Post was by this time George's most intimate friend and he played a key role as editor of *The Leader* (started as a campaign paper) and as campaign manager (14). In the heat of the campaign, Post spoke nightly in the various sections of the city in behalf of George's candidacy. One of the early instances of organized labor in politics, this campaign saw the alliance of Terence Powderly of the Knights of Labor with local socialists and with Samuel Gompers in support of George's land value taxation platform. In spite of labor's support of George, Abram S. Hewitt, himself something of a reform Democrat, was able to amass more than 90,000 votes, thus winning handily over George with 68,000 and young Theodore Roosevelt with 60,000. Although George's backers bitterly complained of being counted out, they were actually quite gratified at the good showing their leader had made and were even more hopeful of future victories.

It was this same coalition of land reformers, socialists, free traders, and unionists which banded together in the next year to form the New York United Labor Party. This time, however, things were not nearly so harmonious. In response to the socialist attempt to capture the Syracuse convention of the ULP, Henry George and Father McGlynn had used their influence to have Post named temporary chairman (15). It was Post's job to keep the socialists from being recognized as bona fide delegates on the pretext that anyone who belonged to another party could not sit as a ULP delegate (16). The Georgists controlled the convention, perhaps too completely, for George was forced against his better judgment to accept the ULP's nomination for the office of Secretary of State. Post was nominated for the office of Attorney General. Having jettisoned

socialist support, the single tax group launched another all-out campaign. Post and George spoke all over the state, Father McGlynn's Anti-Poverty Society staged a fund-raising drive, Tom Johnson gave his usual contribution, and the CLU contributed the proceeds from their annual Labor Fair to aid George's candidacy.

Unfortunately, a good deal of labor support was lost when *The Standard*, in an editorial written by Post, supported in October 1887 the Illinois State Supreme Court's decision to uphold the death penalty against the Haymarket anarchists. And with labor the Georgist coalition lost also the socialist vote (17).

The results of the 1887 election were disappointing. George received only 2,000 more votes in this statewide election than he had in the 1886 city election. And though some elements of the George group had always been skeptical of independent party politics, it took this experience in 1887 to convince them forever that the only effective approach was to work within the major parties and to concentrate upon educational programs.

In the years after 1887, Post continued as a leader in the movement. His most important role was as an editorial writer for the weekly *Standard*, the Henry George organ which had replaced the campaign *Leader* after the socialists had gained control of that paper through manipulation of the stock of the publishing company. The *Standard* was published from January 1887 to August 1893. Its circulation was about 40,000 (18). Though not the editor, Post was responsible for some of the paper's most controversial editorials including the one supporting the death sentence for the Chicago anarchists. This action further lost George support in radical circles, but it was in perfect harmony with the single tax emphasis on lawful change and balance between socialistic and individualistic approaches.

The 1888 presidential contest confronted the single tax movement with an important decision. Should they nominate candidates on a united labor ticket, or should they actually support Harrison or Cleveland, the major party candidates? Since Cleveland had come out strongly in favor of tariff reductions and since single taxers were almost as insistent in their support of free trade as they were of land value taxation, they found it easy to work for the Democrats in 1888. As election day approached, Post and George again found themselves speaking to all kinds of audiences two or three times a week (20). Post worked tirelessly in organizing free trade clubs to help Cleveland (21). The effort failed, Cleveland was defeated for re-election, and the coalition which had

helped George come so close to victory in 1886 had now crumbled. The socialists as well as those in favor of an exclusive labor party and the reformers who were protectionists had all dropped out of the Henry George movement.

A further split in the ranks came between the evangelistic wing of the single taxers which was headed by Father McGlynn and the single taxers who preached the single tax as a good fiscal measure, which was led by Thomas Shearman. McGlynn's total commitment on the Irish question was also felt by many to obscure the really important issue—the advancement of the single tax in America. In addition McGlynn had come close to advocating the nationalization of land in Ireland—a position which American single taxers regarded as anathema to their cause. Post's stand on these controversies was always very close to that of George. Neither did he see the single tax as a mystical cure for all poverty, nor did he see it as simply a more efficient system of taxation. Post was among the leaders of the hard core Henry George people who fashioned a retrenchment policy in the late '80s and early '90s after the high hopes of 1886 had collapsed.

It was under the auspices of the Manhattan Single Tax Club, founded in 1889, that the Georgist group continued to do important work. With Post serving as the first chairman and with Tom Johnson and Henry George on the advisory council, the New York organization sought to educate the whole country to the advantages of land value taxation. Always stressing the difference between Georgism and socialism, the group conducted weekly meetings and invited speakers of all sorts to address them. The Manhattan Single Tax Club was successful in circulating among single taxers all over the country the first massive petition in favor of free trade. They got 115,000 signatures. In addition, through the cooperation of Congressmen Tom Johnson (now in Ohio) and Jerry Simpson of Kansas, the Manhattan Single Tax Club was able to get Congress to print Henry George's *Protection or Free Trade* in the *Congressional Record*. This, of course, allowed cheap publication and wide distribution of the Prophet's word.

Post served also as chairman of the National Single Tax Conference held in New York in 1890. Single Taxers from 17 states came together in an attempt to make the movement a national one. Three years later Post was again chosen chairman when the same group met at Chicago's Columbian Exposition.

IV

DURING THE 1890s Louis Post built up a reputation as the leading advo-

cate of the single tax after Henry George (22). Named editor of the *Standard* in August, 1891, he continued the previous editorial policy of strong support for labor and the single tax in the face of dwindling circulation. The death of his wife, Anna, in November, 1891, was a shock to Post. In his grief, Post threw himself into his work at the *Standard* which was at this time already in deep financial trouble and was seeking further help from Johnson. In 1892 Post covered for the *Standard* the Democratic convention in Chicago where he helped Tom Johnson push through a liberal tariff plank. In August of that year the weekly folded.

In addition to editorial work for the cause, Post often engaged in public debates with various opponents of the single tax. In March 1892, he took on a former single taxer, Daniel DeLeon. Their debate rehearsed the well-worn dialogue on the differences between socialism and the single tax. Post made a real hit with his audience by pointing out that the Georgist philosophy called only for the control of land, the only nonreproducible factor in production, while the socialists would mindlessly nationalize all means of production and destroy individualism.

When the *Standard* finally died in the summer of 1892, George and the other leaders continued until 1894 to try to get Post a Democratic nomination for Congress in New York. When this plan fell through, Louis Post embarked upon a 20-state speaking tour. His repertoire consisted of eight different talks on subjects such as free trade, socialism, and hard times, each of which ended by advocating the land value taxation schemes of Henry George. By May 1893, such favorable reports were coming back to Johnson and George that Johnson was moved to offer \$2000 or one-third of the funds thought necessary to keep Post on the road "laying the foundation for a great deal of good work" (23).

It would be impossible to gauge properly from the available evidence what effect the three crosscountry speaking tours had, either on the audiences or on Louis Post. However, those who have done this sort of thing often speak of the benefits they derive from "pressing the flesh" of the people and familiarizing themselves with the geography and the local problems and the mood of fellow citizens in various sections of the country. It is therefore reasonable to assume that in his hundreds of appearances Post learned a great deal about America which was to give much of his later work authority and realism. Post's work during this period also helped to maintain and strengthen the bonds between single tax groups. This valuable experience undoubtedly helped prepare Post to assume the unofficial national leadership of the single tax movement after George's death in 1897.

Following his first lecture tour, in 1893, Post married Alice Thacher, a co-editor of the Swedenborgian *New Church Messenger*. Her interest in social reform and a mystical type of pacifism and his then-mild interest in Swedenborgianism brought them even closer together. From 1893 to 1928 she served as mate, co-editor, and companion. The new Mrs. Post accompanied Louis on two subsequent lecture tours in 1894 and 1895. Often they worked as a team, with Alice speaking at teas for the ladies in the afternoon and Post speaking to a larger general audience in the evenings.

Apparently Post's activities during the early 90s gained him a sizeable reputation among certain reform elements. In 1894 George A. Schilling, Secretary of the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics, called upon Post to write the *Eighth Biennial Report on the Subject of Taxation* for his department. In this report, Post used the statistics gathered by the Bureau to show that property taxes could never be equitable because of widespread underassessment, especially in Cook County. The existing system only served to tax low and middle income groups and to perpetuate monopolies, especially monopoly of ground rent which Post characterized as only slightly less barbaric than chattel slavery (24). He further pointed out the profound truth that the single taxers had been very early to recognize that the tax structure could be used not only to gather revenue but to effect reforms, destroy monopolies, or redistribute wealth. The report cited the authority of John Stuart Mill, Henry George, Tom Johnson, Richard T. Ely, and Thomas A. Shearman to prove that the single tax would work. It pointed out that the Illinois Federation of Labor had gone on record in favor of land value taxation as well. It concluded by recommending a county option with regard to the single tax (25).

Post stated his radical doctrine clearly and forcefully, something quite unusual for an official report of the State of Illinois. The document proved so popular as to require several printings. Populist farmers seemed especially attracted to the prospect of shifting taxes from farm land to the benefactors of unearned increment in the cities (26). Governor Altgeld is reported to have been highly pleased by the report, and predictably, conservative forces from Chicago were outraged that this type of propaganda had been produced at government expense.

By the spring of 1895, Post had tired of the difficult routine of the itinerant lecturer. New attempts to get him a nomination for a Congressional seat had failed. A possible job on the *New York Journal* never materialized. For a while, Post tried his hand at writing syndicated material for distribution to papers throughout the country at a fee or by

subscription. However, after offering articles on the Holy Alliance, Civil War taxation, the labor troubles of Rochester, New York, and the history of early American monopolies, the one-man Post Syndicate went broke (27).

V

NO WORTHWHILE PATRONAGE JOB in New York had turned up, and Post again pondered his future. How could Post best serve the Henry George movement? The decision came out of a three-way correspondence between Post, George, and Johnson. George played the middle man, suggesting to Johnson that a new single tax publication, perhaps in Cleveland, might bring about great changes in that city. At the same time, George suggested to Post that he keep his eyes open for an opportunity to resume his career as a journalist. By early 1896 the deal had been made. Johnson had bought the *Cleveland Recorder* without Post's knowledge and the management had offered Post an editorship.

Then in his middle forties, Post swung into Cleveland life with enthusiasm. Besides writing for the paper, he taught night classes in economics and the single tax. His classes became so popular that they soon had to be moved from his parlor into a church building to accommodate the crowd. In this period Post was in daily contact with Johnson and he came to know other important Cleveland progressives like Newton D. Baker and Peter Witt, the leader of Cleveland's Central Labor Union.

The editor-in-chief of the daily *Cleveland Recorder* was George A. Robertson, but Post wrote almost all of the editorials. The editorial policy of the *Recorder* was pro-labor and anti-monopoly. Post claimed that it sought to protect and further the rights of men, regardless of class or race (28). The paper offered free want-ad space to the unemployed and waged a campaign against warehouses and gambling rooms because they preyed on the weaknesses of the poor. As a member of the United Associated Presses, it provided good coverage of national and international events. The *Recorder* claimed to have a larger paid mail circulation than any paper in Cleveland. Apparently its influence in the rest of the state was considerable (29).

Post had strongly opposed the Populists in 1892 as a hodge-podge of hopeless third party crackpots whose presence endangered the real hope for reform—Grover Cleveland's free trade program. By 1896 Post was singing a different tune. According to Post, Cleveland's widespread unpopularity in that year was well deserved (30). The President had sold

out to J. P. Morgan in the financial crisis, he had betrayed labor in the Pullman Strike, and he had publicly deserted his party's presidential candidate (31).

Thus, although Post could not put much faith in the silver coinage panacea, his editorials in the *Recorder* during the campaign supported Bryan with enthusiasm. Even though he had some reservations concerning Bryan's ideas, Post claimed that Bryan was a genuine tribune of the people because he sought to unite farmers and workingmen as producers against the non-productive plutocracy (32).

In fact, the major mission of the *Recorder* in the 1896 campaign appears to have been the wooing of organized labor to support the Bryan candidacy. Editorials and news stories placed great emphasis on the "coercion" issue. Every suggestion of attempts by management to influence the votes of its employees was reported in detail. The paper regularly ridiculed Mark Hanna's henchmen for thinking that the free railroad trips to "the Messiah at Canton" could have any real effect on the votes of independent workingmen (33).

Post also conducted a special campaign against Terence Powderly, the ex-president of the Knights of Labor, who endorsed McKinley and the gold standard. When this "Labor Judas" came to town, the *Recorder* described Powderly's meeting as a flop (34). In order to offset the effect which Powderly's appearances in Cleveland might have on workingmen there, the *Recorder* prominently featured, that same day, a dispatch by Henry George which claimed that Chicago labor leaders overwhelmingly supported Bryan (35).

Post recognized Bryan's basic obstacle in attempting to relate to the working man: workers feared inflation. In numerous editorials Post tried to de-emphasize inflation and tried to stress the idea that Bryan stood for the producer—whether he were a farmer or a worker. Besides, Bryan was the only alternative to McKinley. Operating on the assumption that the best defense was a good offense, Post's editorials daily ripped into McKinley, Hanna, and the Republican party. McKinley was afraid to speak out on the issue of enforcement of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (36). Hanna was the corrupt fixer who had garnered a fantastic campaign fund from big business in order to crush labor (37). A Republican victory would imperil the very life of organized labor in America (38). Post wrote in late September: "If organized labor fails to strike at the ballot box at this time, it will awake to learn, perhaps too late for remedy, that the hour for effective strikes has ended" (39). Apparently, Bryan was the last best hope for organized labor.

When the election results were in, the *Recorder* was disappointed. Bryan and the silver issue had lost very badly. Urban workingmen had not supported him very strongly. It was perhaps with some relief that Post announced the demise of the silver issue. Yet the basic social problems would continue and the forces for change needed a leader. Despite the post-election disillusionment, the *Recorder* claimed that Bryan was still that leader. Post wrote: "A better leader no cause ever had; a better leader, the Democratic Party never had. And his career does not end with his defeat. . . . His career in the American struggle for liberty has but begun" (40). Even if it was a partisan statement, it turned out to be a very accurate prediction of Bryan's role in the Democratic Party after 1896.

During the period when Post was with the *Recorder* he continued to serve as critic and confidante to Henry George who was then engaged in writing *The Science of Political Economy*. George sent draft after draft of each chapter and Post corrected them and returned them with surprisingly harsh criticism of the literary style. When George protested that he was not much interested in schoolmaster rules of grammar, Post exploded with a passionate plea that George postpone publication until his prose had been polished to the point where it did justice to his profound thesis (41). The correspondence between Post and the Leader for this period clearly reveals the conflicts that arise when one attempts an honest criticism of the works of a loved one. Though George listened to Post's advice he was not able to take it, for he soon gave up the project completely in order to plunge into another rough-and-tumble campaign for the New York mayoralty in 1897.

Post advised against this latest move, knowing that George could be no match for a united Tammany organization. Since his duties at the *Recorder* kept him in Cleveland, Post was unable to influence George against making the race. Dutifully in late October, Post dropped everything and returned to New York and, for a time, it was 1886 all over again. However, George's Jeffersonian Democratic party was headed for disaster. A few days before the election date, George dropped dead.

With the great Leader gone and with the experiment with the Cleveland *Recorder* apparently failing due to intrastaff conflicts, adjustments had to be made. At the end of 1897, ownership of the *Recorder* changed hands and Post left the paper. For a few months Post earned a meager existence as an editorial correspondent for the *National Single Taxer* of St. Paul, Minnesota. In February 1898 he was offered its editorship, but by then the Posts were thinking of moving to Chicago where they established *The Public*.

Thus after almost 20 years in the single tax movement, Post found himself its de facto leader. Lacking the charisma of Henry George, he seems through *The Public* to have guided the single tax movement into the mainstream of reform in the progressive era where its independent identity often became mingled with that of scores of other reform movements (42).

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1. Charles A. Barker's *Henry George* (New York, 1965) provides a discussion of the movement as a whole during this period.
2. Louis F. Post, "Living a Long Life Over Again: A Memory Voyage Across the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century and the First Quarter of the Twentieth," unpublished MS, 1927, Post Papers, Library of Congress, p. 150. Hereafter cited as "Autobiography."
3. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, *Investigation of the Administration of Louis F. Post, in the Matter of Deportation of Aliens, Hearings*, before House Committee on Rules, 66th Cong., 2d. sess. on House Resolution 522, Part 2, 1920, p. 243.
4. Autobiography, p. 190.
5. William McCabe, "Louis F. Post," *Typographical Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (February, 1914), p. 161.
6. Post, *The Prophet of San Francisco* (New York, 1930), p. 27. Most scholars have tended to de-emphasize the continuity between the anti-slavery spirit of pre-Civil War times and later reform movements.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
8. Autobiography, p. 239.
9. Arthur N. Young, *History of the Single Tax Movement* (Princeton, 1916), p. 83.
10. Frederick C. Leubuscher in "The Post Memorial Meeting in New York," *Land and Freedom*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (May-June, 1928), p. 71.
11. Barker, p. 418.
12. Post, *Prophet*, p. 47.
13. Stuart Portner, "Louis F. Post, His Life and His Times," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1940), p. 60.
14. Frederick C. Leubuscher in "The Post Memorial Meeting in New York," p. 71.
15. Nathan Fine, *Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States 1828-1928* (New York, 1928), p. 47.
16. Barker, p. 498.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 503.
18. Post, *Prophet*, p. 97.
19. Henry George to James Gulshaw, November 25, 1887, Henry George Collection, New York Public Library (hereafter cited as HGC). Although the *Standard* approved the sentence, it recommended clemency.
20. Portner, "Louis F. Post," p. 110.
21. Young, *The History of the Single Tax Movement*, p. 131.
22. Ransom E. Noble, Jr., "Henry George and the Progressive Movement," *Am. J. Econ. Sociol.* Vol. 8, No. 2 (April, 1949), p. 260.
23. Tom L. Johnson to Henry George, May 4, 1893, HGC.
24. State of Illinois, *Eighth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of Illinois, Subject: Taxation* (Springfield, 1895), p. 384.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 396.
26. George A. Schilling in *The Public*, Vol. 19, No. 7 (February 25, 1916), p. 183.
27. See galley proofs of these articles in Post Papers, LC.
28. Louis Post, "A Subscriber Lost," *Cleveland Recorder*, October 1, 1896, p. 2. *Cleveland Recorder* hereafter cited as CR.

29. Editorial, "Circulation Mounting," *CR.*, September 30, 1896, p. 2.
30. Louis Post, "Tom L. Johnson's Withdrawal," *CR.*, September 12, 1896, p. 2.
31. *Ibid.*, "Grover Cleveland," *CR.*, September 14, 1896, p. 2.
32. *Ibid.*, "Farmers and Workingmen," *CR.*, September 15, 1896, p. 2.
33. *Ibid.*, "Coercion," *CR.*, October 28, 1896, p. 2.
34. *Ibid.*, "Powderly," *CR.*, September 22, 1896, p. 2.
35. Henry George, "Labor is Going for Bryan," *CR.*, September 21, 1896, p. 2.
36. Louis Post, "McKinley and the Trusts," *CR.*, October 10, 1896, p. 2.
37. *Ibid.*, "Hanna's Tricks," *CR.*, October 27, 1896, p. 2.
38. *Ibid.*, "Effects of a Crushing Defeat," *CR.*, October 20, 1896, p. 2.
39. *Ibid.*, "Labor and the Election," *CR.*, September 28, 1896, p. 2.
40. *Ibid.*, "The Result," *CR.*, November 4, 1896, p. 2.
41. Louis Post to Henry George, March 3, 1897, HGC.
42. See D. Candelord, "The Public of Louis F. Post and Progressivism," *Mid-America*, 56 (April 1974), pp. 109-25.

In Memoriam: Oscar Sherwin

DR. OSCAR SHERWIN, professor emeritus of English at the City College of New York and member of the editorial board of this *Journal* almost since its founding, died on April 30, 1976 in his 74th year. In his passing, which came unexpectedly when he seemed to be in his usual good health and was at the height of his intellectual powers, we of the *Journal* group lose a warm friend and an indefatigable collaborator; American literary research loses one of the leading exponents of the interdisciplinary approach.

Oscar Sherwin's life revolved around four focal points.

The first, of course, was his home, the apartment on New York's west side and the Sherwin summer place, the farm in Brandon, Vermont. There he and his wife (the former Stella Zins) surrounded themselves with antique furniture and collections of prints, porcelain and glass, chosen first for their beauty. There too they brought up their two children, whose achievements on their own account have been their greatest satisfaction.

The second was, understandably, his class-room where he sought to instill in his students a love for letters as one of the essentials of the good life and as a means of communication required for the fulfilled personality. There too he recruited promising candidates for the rewarding life of the literary and historical researcher, which he put on a par with teaching because he considered the accumulation of knowledge and the communication and popularization of it complementary parts of a scholar's active life, each interacting with the other to achieve a higher level of excellence in performance. Oscar believed that the dictum to teachers to "publish or perish" was literally true and had nothing to do with jobs, tenure or academic preferment. Without research and publication, he thought, the scholar mummified long before his administration passed him over or severed him from the payroll.

Obviously, then, his third world was the Research Division of the New York Public Library, where much of the investigation that distinguishes his writings was carried on with the aid of a dedicated library staff. A desk was set aside for him in the section reserved for working scholars and he spent many long hours grubbing through piles of books, first-hand sources on his "period," the 18th century in England and the 19th in America. On occasion, when the 20,000 volume library I used to have required supplementation, I would encounter Oscar there and, surrounded by his beloved source books,